

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA
BLUEFIELD DIVISION**

DEVON MICHAEL SAPPLETON,)	
)	
Petitioner,)	
)	
v.)	Civil Action No. 1:11-0552
)	
KAREN HOGSTEN, Warden,)	
<i>et al.,</i>)	
)	
Respondents.)	

PROPOSED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Pending is Plaintiff's Application under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 for Writ of Habeas Corpus by a Person in State or Federal Custody.¹ (Document No. 1.) In his Petition, Petitioner argues that “[t]he Bureau of Prisons has scored his custody classification wrongfully and has imposed Greatest Severity Public Safety Factor (PSF) against him.” (*Id.*) Petitioner states that pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552a, a “government agency who keeps record must take reasonable steps to maintain the accuracy of the information to assure fairness to the individual.” (*Id.*, p. 2.) Petitioner alleges that he has “proved through several attempts that the two Maryland State Cases Nos. CAL07-22316 and CN 76762 should never have been considered when scoring his custody level because those prior convictions are then, and still are, constitutionally invalid².” (*Id.*) Petitioner claims that the “BOP has neglected

¹ Because Petitioner is acting *pro se*, the documents which he has filed in this case are held to a less stringent standard than if they were prepared by a lawyer and therefore, they are construed liberally. *See Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21, 92 S.Ct. 594, 30 L.Ed.2d 652 (1972).

² To the extent Petitioner is attempting to challenge the validity of his sentence, Petitioner is not entitled to relief under Section 2241. The Fourth Circuit has not recognized an entitlement to proceed under section 2241 when an inmate challenges his *sentence* contending that the remedy under Section 2255 is inadequate or ineffective. *See United States v. Poole*, 531 F.3d 263, 267 fn. 7 (4th Cir. 2008), (“Fourth Circuit precedent has likewise not extended the reach of the [Section 2255(e)] savings clause to those petitioners challenging only their sentences. *See In re Jones*, 226 F.3d 228, 333 - 34 (4th Cir. 2000)(outlining the circumstances in which ‘§ 2255 is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of a *conviction*’)(emphasis added).”)

to adhere to the laws that regulate these matters with the erroneous pre-sentence report [and] it has adversely affected the determinations by the BOP regarding custody and security classification, job and quarters assignments and the opportunity to gainfully be active in programs.” (*Id.*) Accordingly, Petitioner requests that the “Pre-Sentence Report be disregarded relating to the two prior Maryland State Cases” and that his custody classification be recalculated. (*Id.*, p. 4.)

STANDARD

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the Court is required to screen each case in which a prisoner seeks redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity. On screening, the Court must recommend dismissal of the case if the complaint is frivolous, malicious or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. A “frivolous” complaint is one which is based upon an indisputably meritless legal theory. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 112 S.Ct. 1728, 118 L.Ed.2d 340 (1992). A “frivolous” claim lacks “an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325, 109 S.Ct. 1827, 1831 - 32, 104 L.Ed.2d 338 (1989). A claim lacks an arguable basis in law when it is “based on an indisputably meritless legal theory.” *Id.*, 490 U.S. at 327, 109 S.Ct. at 1833. A claim lacks an arguable basis in fact when it describes “fantastic or delusional scenarios.” *Id.*, 490 U.S. at 327 - 328, 109 S.Ct. at 1833. A complaint therefore fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted factually when it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief. With these standards in mind, the Court will assess Petitioner’s allegations in view of applicable law.

DISCUSSION

In considering an inmate’s application for *habeas* relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2241, the Court must consider whether the inmate is “in custody in violation of the Constitution or laws or treaties of the United States.” 28 U.S.C. § 2241(c)(3); *Rose v. Hodges*, 423 U.S. 19, 21, 96 S.Ct. 175, 177,

46 L.Ed.2d 162 (1975). The Court finds that Petitioner claims are not cognizable under Section 2241 because he is challenging the conditions of his confinement. A Section 2241 petition is used to attack the manner in which a sentence is executed, e.g., time credit calculations. Thus, a Section 2241 petition is appropriate where the prisoner challenges the fact or length of his confinement, but generally not the conditions of that confinement. See Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 499-500 (1973); Ajaj v. Smith, 108 Fed.Appx. 743, 744 (4th Cir. 2004). “If a prisoner seeks a ‘quantum change’ in his level of custody such as freedom, his remedy is habeas corpus.” Campbell v. Deboo, 2011 WL 1694454, * 2 (N.D.W.Va. May 4, 2011). If a prisoner, however, “seeks a different program, location, or environment, his challenge is to the condition of his confinement rather than the fact of his confinement and his remedy is under civil rights law.” Id.; also see Biedrzycki v. O’Brien, 2011 WL 6748505 (N.D.W.Va. Oct. 14, 2011)(dismissing petitioner’s Section 2241 claim where petitioner was “merely challenging the B.O.P.’s reliance on information in his PSR that was used to determine his custody classification and security level, neither of which affect the duration of his sentence”). In the instant case, Petitioner argues that his custody classification is improperly calculated based upon inaccurate information contained in his Presentence Report. Thus, Petitioner complains that the erroneous classification has had adverse effects upon his “job and quarters assignments” and prevents him from participating in certain BOP programs. Therefore, the undersigned recommends that Petitioner’s claims be construed and considered under Bivens.

A Bivens action is a judicially created damages remedy which is designed to vindicate violations of constitutional rights by federal actors. See Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 403 U.S. 388, 395 -97, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 29 L.Ed.2d 619 (1971); See also Carlson v. Green, 446 U.S. 14, 100 S.Ct. 1468, 64 L.Ed.2d 15 (1980)(extending Bivens to Eighth Amendment claims); Davis v. Passman, 442 U.S. 228, 239 n. 18, 99 S.Ct. 2264, 2274 n. 18, 60

L.Ed.2d 846 (1979)(extending Bivens to allow citizen's recovery of damages resulting from a federal agent's violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.) A Bivens action is the federal counterpart of an action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. An action for money damages may be brought against federal agents acting under the color of their authority for injuries caused by their unconstitutional conduct. Proof of causation between the official's conduct and the alleged injury is necessary for there to be liability. A Petitioner asserting a claim under Bivens must show the violation of a valid constitutional right by a person acting under color of federal law. The United States Supreme Court has held that an inmate may name a federal officer in an individual capacity as a defendant in alleging an Eighth Amendment constitutional violation pursuant to Bivens. See Wilson v. Seiter, 501 U.S. 294, 111 S.Ct. 2321, 115 L.Ed. 2d 171 (1991). However, Bivens claims are not actionable against the United States, federal agencies, or public officials acting in their official capacities. See FDIC v. Meyer, 510 U.S. 471, 475, 484-86, 114 S.Ct. 996, 127 L.Ed. 2d 308 (1994); Berger v. Pierce, 933 F.2d 393, 397 (6th Cir. 1991); Reingold v. Evers, 187 F.3d 348, 355 n. 7 (4th Cir. 1999).

To determine whether an inmate retains a certain liberty interest, the Court must look to the nature of the claimed interest and determine whether the Due Process Clause applies. See Board of Regents of State Colleges v. Roth, 408 U.S. 564, 570-71, 92 S.Ct. 2701, 2705-06, 33 L.Ed.2d 548 (1972). An inmate holds a protectable right in those interests to which he has a legitimate claim of entitlement. See Greenholtz v. Inmates of Neb. Penal and Corr. Complex, 442 U.S. 1, 7, 99 S.Ct. 2100, 2103-04, 60 L.Ed.2d 668 (1979)(quoting Board of Regents v. Roth, 408 U.S. at 577, 92 S.Ct. 2709). In Gaston v. Taylor, the Fourth Circuit determined that an inmate possesses a claim of entitlement in those interests "which were not taken away, expressly or by implication, in the original sentence to confinement." Id. at 343. Such interests, however,

will be generally limited to freedom from restraint which, while not exceeding the sentence in such an unexpected manner as to give rise to protection by the Due Process Clause of its own force, nonetheless imposes atypical and significant hardship on the inmate in relation to the ordinary incidents of prison life.

Sandin v. Conner, 515 U.S. 472, 484, 115 S.Ct. 2293, 2300, 132 L.Ed.2d 418 (1995)(citations omitted). Consequently, to establish a deprivation of a liberty interest with respect to inmate classification, Petitioner must show either (1) that he has a legitimate entitlement to a certain classification level, or (2) that the denial thereof creates an atypical and significant hardship on him in relation to the ordinary incidents of prison life. See Sandin, 515 U.S. at 483-84, 115 S.Ct. at 2299-2300.

Federal prisoners have no constitutional or inherent right to receive a particular security or custody classification. See Moody v. Daggett, 429 U.S. 78, 88, n. 9, 97 S.Ct. 274, 279, n. 9, 50 L.Ed.2d 236 (1976)(“[N]o due process protections were required upon the discretionary transfer of state prisoners to a substantially less agreeable prison, even where that transfer visited a ‘grievous loss’ upon the inmate. The same is true of prisoner classification and eligibility for rehabilitative programs in the federal system. Congress has given federal prison officials full discretion to control these conditions of confinement, 18 U.S.C. § 4081, and petitioner has no legitimate statutory or constitutional entitlement to invoke due process.”). The Fourth Circuit has specifically stated that “[t]he federal constitution itself vests no liberty interest in inmates retaining or receiving any particular security or custody status ‘[a]s long as the [challenged] conditions or degree of confinement . . . is within the sentence imposed . . . And is not otherwise violative of the Constitution.” Slezak v. Evatt, 21 F.3d 590, 594 (4th Cir. 1994), cert. denied, 513 U.S. 889, 115 S.Ct. 235, 130 L.Ed.2d 158 (1994); see also Neals v. Norwood, 59 F.3d 530, 533 (5th Cir. 1995)(finding that “a prison inmate does not have a protectable liberty or property interest in his custodial classification and an inmate’s disagreement with a classification is insufficient to establish a

constitutional violation"); Posey v. Dewalt, 86 F. Supp.2d 565, 571 (E.D.Va. 1999), appeal dismissed by, 215 F.3d 1320 (4th Cir. 2000), cert. denied, 531 U.S. 971, 121 S.Ct. 411, 148 L.Ed. 318 (2000)(stating that “[p]ut simply, petitioner has not stated a due process claim because he has no protected liberty interest in a particular classification within BOP”). Furthermore, neither Section 3621(b) nor the BOP’s Program Statement (P.S. 5100.08) contain explicit mandatory language or standards limiting the BOP’s discretion, which may have given rise to a protected liberty interest in a particular security classification. Title 18, U.S.C. § 3621(b) clearly vests the BOP with broad discretionary authority as to prisoners’ placement and classification while incarcerated. 18 U.S.C. § 3621. The language of this statute which provides that the “Bureau may designate any available penal or correctional facility that meets minimum standards of health and habitability . . . that the Bureau determines to be appropriate and suitable,” is clearly permissive; the statute does not *mandate* that the BOP place a prisoner in a certain facility.³ Additionally, P.S. 5100.08 allows the BOP to use its “professional judgment” in deciding an inmate’s classification. Specifically, P.S. 5100.08⁴ states as follows:

It should be clearly understood that the Custody Classification Form only

³ Title 18 U.S.C. § 3621 provides that the BOP may consider the following in determining placement of prisoners:

- (1) the resources of the facility contemplated;
- (2) the nature and circumstances of the offense;
- (3) the history and characteristics of the prisoner;
- (4) any statement by the court state imposed the sentence - -
 - (A) concerning the purposes for which the sentence to imprisonment was determined to be warranted; or
 - (B) recommending a type of penal or correctional facility as appropriate; and
- (5) any pertinent policy statement issued by the Sentencing Commission pursuant to 994(a)(2) of Title 28.

⁴ P.S. 5100.08 sets forth the BOP’s policies and procedures for the inmate classification system. P.S. 5100.08 provides that “classification of inmates is necessary to place each inmate in the most appropriate security level institution that also meets their program needs and is consistent with the Bureau’s mission to protect society.”

recommends an inmate's custody. The Unit Team and/or Warden is the final review authority. The intent of the Custody Classification system is to permit staff to use professional judgment within specific guidelines.

P.S. 5100.08, Chapter 6, p. 1. Thus, the "classification and transfer of inmates among authorized institutions is peculiarly an administrative function fully within the discretion given to prison officials." O'Bar v. Pinion, 953 F.2d 74, 84 (4th Cir. 1991); also see Bell v. Wolfish, 441 U.S. 520, 99 S.Ct. 1861, 60 L.Ed.2d 447 (1979)(stating that "[p]rison administrators therefore should be accorded wide-ranging deference in the adoption and execution of policies and practices that in their judgment are needed to preserve internal order and discipline and to maintain institutional security").⁵

Furthermore, the BOP's determination concerning Petitioner's security level does not constitute an "atypical and significant hardship" on Petitioner in relation to the ordinary incidents of prison life. See Sandin v. Conner, 515 U.S. at 482, 115 S.Ct. at 2299; Franklin v. District of Columbia, 163 F.3d 625, 634-35 (D.C. Cir. 1998)(Issues of housing and transfers are issues which occur within the "day-to-day management of prisons."). Because nothing in the record indicates that Petitioner's conditions of confinement at FCI McDowell were atypical or resulted in a significant hardship, the undersigned finds that Petitioner has failed to demonstrate a due process violation. Therefore, Petitioner does not possess a constitutionally protected interest in his inmate classification.

PROPOSAL AND RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing, it is therefore respectfully **PROPOSED** that the District Court confirm and accept the foregoing factual findings and legal conclusions and **RECOMMENDED** that

⁵ Petitioner alleges that the BOP erred in determining the number of points attributed under his Criminal History Score, which resulted in his higher security classification. P.S. 5100.08, however, provides that the BOP is allowed to use its "professional judgment" in deciding custody classification and "[c]ustody changes are not dictated solely by the point total." P.S. 5100.08, Chapter 6, p. 2. Thus, Petitioner is merely speculating that his security level would be reduced if points were removed from his Criminal History Score.

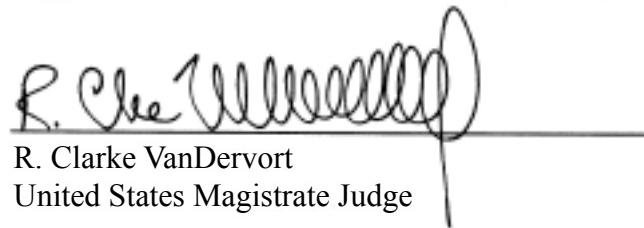
the District Court **CONSTRUE** Petitioner's Petition for Writ of *Habeas Corpus* by a Person in Federal Custody under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 (Document No. 1.) as a Complaint filed pursuant to Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 403 U.S. 388, 395 -97, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 29 L.Ed.2d 619 (1971), **DISMISS** Petitioner's Complaint (Document No. 1.) and remove this matter from the Court's docket.

The Petitioner is hereby notified that this "Proposed Findings and Recommendation" is hereby **FILED**, and a copy will be submitted to the Honorable United States District Judge David A. Faber. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 28, United States Code, Section 636(b)(1)(B), and Rule 6(d) and 72(b), Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the Petitioner shall have seventeen (17) days (fourteen days, filing of objections and three days, mailing/service) from the date of filing of this Findings and Recommendation within which to file with the Clerk of this Court specific written objections identifying the portions of the Findings and Recommendation to which objection is made and the basis of such objection. Extension of this time period may be granted for good cause.

Failure to file written objections as set forth above shall constitute a waiver of *de novo* review by the District Court and a waiver of appellate review by the Circuit Court of Appeals. Snyder v. Ridenour, 889 F.2d 1363, 1366 (4th Cir. 1989); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 155 (1985); Wright v. Collins, 766 F.2d 841, 846 (4th Cir. 1985); United States v. Schronce, 727 F.2d 91, 94 (4th Cir. 1984). Copies of such objections shall be served on opposing parties, Judge Faber and this Magistrate Judge.

The Clerk is requested to send a copy of this Proposed Findings and Recommendation to Petitioner, who is acting *pro se*, and transmit a copy to counsel of record.

Date: May 16, 2014.


R. Clarke VanDervort
United States Magistrate Judge